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THE ROLE OF A STATEWIDE SYSTEM OF HOME STUDY IN NEW YORK STATE, A FEASIBILITY STUDY.

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THE NEW YORK STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT HAS RECEIVED FUNDS UNDER THE ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION ACT OF 1965 (TITLE V) TO INVESTIGATE THE NEED FOR A STATEWIDE HOME STUDY PROGRAM IN NEW YORK ON THE SECONDARY AND COLLEGE LEVELS. THE STUDY WILL INVESTIGATE HOW A PROGRAM OF HOME STUDY WOULD SUPPLEMENT AND STRENGTHEN EXISTING EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS, AND WILL ATTEMPT TO DETERMINE THE COST AND FINANCIAL FEASIBILITY, ADMINISTRATIVE ARRANGEMENTS, THE ROLE OF NEW TECHNOLOGIES (USE OF RECORDS AND TAPES, PROGRAMED MATERIALS, MOBILE LIBRARIES, AND "TEL-LECTURES,"), AND CONTRACT AVAILABILITY OF PRESENT HOME STUDY COURSES. SPECIAL ATTENTION WILL BE GIVEN TO THE INSTRUCTIONAL NEEDS OF THE MATURE STUDENT. IN THE PROPOSAL THE AUTHOR DISCUSSES THE HISTORY OF HOME STUDY IN AMERICAN EDUCATION AND IN NEW YORK STATE, AND DESCRIBES HOW A HOME STUDY WORKS. THE AUTHOR POINTS OUT THAT NEW YORK STATE'S SYSTEM OF EDUCATION HAS UNIQUE FEATURES THAT COULD PROVIDE ANSWERS TO CRITICISMS OF THE EDUCATIONAL QUALITY LEVELED AT HOME STUDY EDUCATION. AMONG THESE UNIQUE FEATURES ARE THE REGENTS AND COLLEGE PROFICIENCY EXAMINATIONS TO MEASURE EDUCATIONAL QUALITY, AND STRONG EXISTING EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS WHICH OFFER TESTING AND GUIDANCE SERVICES TO LOWER THE HIGH DROPOUT RATE OF LEARNERS. (AJ)

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THE UNIVERSITY OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK
The State Education Department
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# The Role of a Statewide System of Home Study in New York State

## A Feasibility Study: Proposal

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The State Education Department has received funds under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (Title V) to evaluate the need for a statewide home study program in New York State and to anticipate the possible administrative and financial arrangements of such a program. The study will be concerned with the need for courses (academic, vocational and technical) generally offered in the latter half of the secondary school program and in the first two years of college. It will not be limited to this range however, should it appear that extension above or below these levels would serve other needs particularly in the areas of teacher certification, in-service training, professional "updating", etc. While this generally defines the educational level to which a home study program would be initially geared, it is believed that home study education holds promise for learners at age levels ranging from junior high school age to senior citizen status.

The study is particularly consistent with present concerns for the especial educational needs of segments of our population -- the disadvantaged youth and his adult counterpart, the mature woman desiring further education, the college student seeking acceleration through independent study, the highly capable high school student whose curricular needs cannot always be served by his local school, the male worker who needs new job skills, the individual youngster or adult who because of a handicap or extended illness is home- or hospital-bound, the inmate of a correctional, health or mental health institution for whom education is a vital part of rehabilitation, the college student in a "study abroad" program, the Peace Corps volunteer, etc.

Many of these are presently served by existing educational institutions. On the other hand the focus on these individuals has been sharpened by the realization that present programs have not adequately met their needs. The study would attempt to identify needs above and beyond those satisfied by existing programs and to determine whether there are particular needs or particular educational focuses called for in New York State which present out-of-state and/or private correspondence programs do not serve.

## I. Home Study Education: Some Background Information

A. A definition: "Home study" is used interchangeably with "correspondence study" although the former emphasizes the learning location while the latter describes one of the ways of reaching and maintaining contact with the home-based learner. Whatever the label, a home study course has come to mean a directed program of instruction for the student including periodic evaluation by a qualified instructor. It is these characteristics of planned instruction and student-teacher communication which distinguish the home study course from "self-study".

Home study also implies a flexibility not found in the formal classroom situation with its somewhat rigid attendance and residence requirements, fixed enrollment dates and class schedules, adherence to school terms, etc. It is this flexibility that seems particularly attractive in terms of the individuals commented on above.

Although not implied in the definition of home study but apparent in its operation is the adult level of the student popu-

lation. In any proposal for a statewide system of home study, therefore, special attention should be given to serving the instructional needs of the mature student.

And finally, home study has traditionally connoted a wealth of written material (correspondence) that is instructor-prepared and student-read. However, the study should consider the utilization of the new technologies of learning; records and tapes, programmed materials, mobile libraries, tel-lectures, etc.*

B. The place of home study in American education**: Gayle Childs has pointed out that correspondence study in the United States is really a product of the twentieth century although several schools were in operation in the late 1800's. It was made possible by two conditions: a rapid and dependable mail service and the broad base provided by almost universal elementary education of a relatively high quality***. (The first correspondence study program in America is thought to have been introduced by William Rainey Harper in 1884 as part of the Chautauqua movement in New York State.) These factors combined with a tremendous and growing

* Educational television is, of course, a very obvious method of home study. However, its utilization is not of primary concern in this investigation except as the system under study could be articulated with ETV offerings.

** The American Council on Education and the National Commission on Accrediting are presently sponsoring a comprehensive study on correspondence education. The study is under the direction of Dean Ossian MacKenzie of the Pennsylvania State University and is financed by the Carnegie Corporation of New York.

*** In an address delivered to the Extension Course Institute Conference, Gunter AF Base, April 15, 1965. Dr. Childs is Associate Director of Class and Correspondence Instruction, The University Extension Division, at the University of Nebraska, Lincoln, Nebraska.

demand have brought correspondence education to a point where it is estimated that more than four million Americans are enrolled in courses at the secondary, post secondary and college levels and in vocational, technical and academic areas.

A goodly portion of the growth of correspondence education can be attributed to American industry. In 1963 the National Home Study Council reported that about 8,000 companies had agreements with accredited schools. This broad utilization of home study courses by cost-conscious American business provides an indication of the value of correspondence study as a method of education.

Much credit for the impact of correspondence study on American education is owed to the two national associations: the National Home Study Council (private correspondence schools) and the National University Extension Association (university extension divisions which conduct correspondence schools).* NHSC sets rigid standards for accreditation and its Accrediting Commission is recognized by the United States Office of Education. At present there are almost 80 schools accredited by NHSC. The Division of Correspondence Study of the National University Extension Association lists more than 60 colleges and universities which have home study programs.

* There is also an active international organization, the International Council on Correspondence Education. It is interesting to note that correspondence study in Europe predates that of American home study. Modern home study had its inception in Germany in 1856. The University of London began its program in the 1870's.

C. Home study education: Does it work? Home study has not always been looked upon with approval by the "resident" educator. This attitude stems, in part, from the fact that not every home study course nor every home study school is born of high purpose or reflects high quality. Much of the unfavorable attitude, however, stems from the classroom teacher's lack of knowledge about home study education as it is conducted by reliable and well-regarded private agencies and by universities and colleges.

The enrollment figures given earlier attest in large measure to the efficacy of home study education. The large number of colleges and universities offering correspondence courses is evidence that many professional educators have come to realize the value of home study in America's total system of education. As pointed out earlier, American industry's massive subscription to home study programs is also evidence of its value as a method of education.

More directly, research indicates that the correspondence student fares well when compared to his classroom counterpart. Childs reported at the 1961 conference of the International Council on Correspondence Education that several studies

> "... on the success of college correspondence study (show) that the student who enrolls is above average in intelligence, attains above average grades and does equally as well as or better than resident students. On the high school level ... students who are above average intellect enroll in correspondence courses, achieve equally as well or better than the residence students and are more likely to succeed in college"

Not every correspondence student, however, is a highly motivated and determined learner. The drop-out rate is high. Home study educators feel that this is due in part to the somewhat impersonal nature of correspondence education. Some individ-

uals do not operate effectively in the isolated learning situation. Correspondence educators are attempting to reduce the feeling of isolation and, at the same time, increase motivation by organizing correspondence study groups. Most of the basic learning still takes place independently but the student is able to meet periodically with a person who is knowledgeable in the subject and with other students taking the same course.

D. The place of home study in New York State: While there are undoubtedly thousands of New Yorkers participating in home study programs, most of the programs are conducted outside of New York. (The University of Wisconsin alone is reported to have 400 New York State residents enrolled in its Correspondence Instruction Program.) There are several licensed private schools located in the State whose programs are primarily vocational or technical in kind.* Their licensing is handled by the State Education Department's Bureau of Occupational School Supervision under the Assistant Commissioner for Occupational Education.

There are no home study programs sponsored by any of the colleges or universities in the State. Further, Commissioner's Regulations stipulate that credit toward a degree cannot be earned via correspondence** although this regulation is somewhat obviated by the College Proficiency Examination Program which provides for the validation of, and permits the granting of credit for, an individual's subject matter competencies however they were gained.

* Only schools whose main base of operation is in New York State can be licensed. The State Education Department has no jurisdiction over out-of-state schools.

** Except that correspondence courses for United States armed services personnel given and validated by the United States Armed Forces Institute may be recognized for credit if they are appropriate to the institution's degree requirements.

## II. Considerations Underlying the Study

The assessment of the need and how best to meet it will be done against a background of factors.

First, the proposed exploration should focus separately on each of the two educational levels (secondary and college) for which the statewide program is recommended. The problems may well differ at these levels and, therefore, so will the concerns of the professional educator at each. At the secondary school level, for example, there is a traditional statewide instructional pattern, emanating from the State Education Department and reaching every secondary school student in the State. At the college level, on the other hand, diversity in purpose and service among the more than two hundred institutions is an acknowledged and, indeed, a fostered characteristic. At this level too, the role of the private institutions is a signal feature of the State's total system of higher education. Are these and other characteristics of each educational level of such strength and value that they should be reflected in a home study program?

Second, the program if established will inevitably be oriented to the adult learner. Major consideration must be given not only to the adult's subject needs, but also to the administrative manner in which the service is rendered, the presentation of instructional materials, the convenience of scheduling and the nature and location of supporting services. If a program is established it should, from its basic philosophical concerns to its administrative details and functioning, be so arranged that it is not only possible, but reasonably attractive and convenient for the adult learner to continue his or her education.

Third, a statewide system of home study would call for an educational and administrative apparatus of considerable staff size. It would require the services of instructors, curriculum specialists, guidance counselors, measurement technicians, communications specialists and supporting administrative, technical and clerical staff. While some of the component services and personnel are now available, considerable increases can be anticipated if the program were favorably received.

Fourth, New York State's system of education has unique features that could provide some answer to criticisms sometimes leveled at home study education. The most telling of these criticisms, that concerning the difficulty of determining the educational quality of the end product, is readily answered in New York State. Regents examinations, perhaps with some special modification for adults, could serve to validate the outcomes of secondary school courses. At the college level, College Proficiency Examinations would serve this purpose.

Another weakness of home study which is believed to contribute to its high drop-out rate is the isolation of the learner from both his instructor and other students. This weakness could be greatly minimized by articulation with this State's very strong existing programs (adult education, library extension, museum offerings, community colleges, industrial training programs, etc.) which could provide opportunities for periodic instructor-student meetings and for group get-togethers of students. Also, it is thought that existing institutions could provide in every community of the state, vitally needed testing and counseling services.

Fifth, home study need no longer be limited to "correspondence" as its essential form of communication between teacher and pupil. Tapes, records, and films are obvious alternatives. The educational communications specialist now goes beyond these to such developments as computer-based instruction for entire communities. Playback equipment that is sturdy and relatively inexpensive is within the reach of more and more Americans of modest means. Miniaturization of devices has greatly increased their portability and, therefore, their utility. The potential of the telephone for "tel-lectures" and direct communication between student and teacher has hardly been tapped. The problem for a statewide home study school will be how to utilize the new devices.

## III. Problems for study

With the above considerations providing a backdrop the study will have the following points of focus:

A. Determination of need: What numbers of adults presently unable to meet available classroom schedules because of family and job responsibilities would actually complete their high school education through correspondence courses? Would men and women presently employed take courses to prepare themselves for new job categories or to upgrade themselves within their present areas of employment? To what degree could correspondence courses complement present training programs carried on by business, industry and labor unions in New York State? Are there special training needs of government agencies at all levels that correspondence courses could serve? What numbers of "mature women" would prepare them-

selves for the labor market through this means? Would the presently unmet training needs of agencies and organizations which rely heavily on volunteer services be met through these means? Would adults in significant numbers have a general cultural interest that would result in a course enrollment?

Can the disadvantaged youth and his adult counterpart be served by correspondence study if, perhaps, only after his verbal capacity and level of reading comprehension is improved to a point where he can work effectively with written materials? Can the special state and federal programs that have been established for his job training needs be complemented by available home study materials?

To what extent could the anticipated strain on higher education facilities due to increasing enrollments be eased by college-level correspondence courses? Would higher institutions promote such course offerings among their present students as a means of independent study? To what degree could evening college and extension students be further served by home study courses that would complement their classroom courses? Could student needs in study-abroad programs be served through home study courses? What college-level needs of the Peace Corps volunteer could be met by such offerings?

Are there professional inservice training needs of a specific nature in teaching, in the health sciences and related health services, in engineering, law, librarianship, that could be met by home study courses? Would non-working women college graduates take professional courses that would lead to certification in teaching, social work, librarianship, nursing and the health services, and

other professional and sub-professional areas of need? What part of the massive training needs in technical occupations could be served by correspondence courses? Can the training of "aides" in such fields as teaching, library services, nursing, etc. be enhanced by the availability of home study materials?

Would significant numbers of secondary school students be urged by their local schools to undertake correspondence study with a view to curriculum enrichment, particularly in areas of "advanced placement" and college study? To what degree would public school adult educators utilize correspondence offerings to enrich their programs? Could a home study program located in New York State be particularly responsive to the needs of home-bound or hospitalized students?

What numbers of correctional institution inmates could benefit from home study courses at both secondary and college levels? Similarly, would individuals in mental health rehabilitation programs be likely to enroll in home study courses above and beyond what their institutions' educational programs now offer them?

Would museums and libraries which conduct adult education programs find home study materials helpful in their activities? Similarly, would there be any utilization of home study materials by agencies such as YW's, Jewish Community Centers, etc. which conduct educational programs?

B. Administrative arrangements: What would seem to be the best administrative organization for a statewide home study program?

Would any of the colleges or universities be willing to undertake the program? Are those higher institutions that might be

interested equally well staffed to offer the wide variety of courses suggested by the kinds of individuals the program would be looking to serve? Would their respective institutional experiences and staffing be such that any of them could adequately develop and provide instructional services at the secondary level or in non-collegiate areas. Do size and statewide location of units give the public institutions (State University and City University) an especially good foundation on which to build a program? Is there a multi-institutional approach that could be effected?

Would there be advantage to having the State Education Department direct the program?* Would the Department's traditional involvement with secondary education make it the logical center for the home study system? Would its incursion into the instructional field be inconsistent with its present reason for being and, possibly, detract greatly from its present leadership role? Could the Department mount the needed staff? Or, would the Department's heavy reliance on part-time consultant services drawn from all educational sectors give its role an especial strength?

Would effective articulation with existing programs (public school adult education, library facilities, educational television, etc.) be achieved as well under any of the possible arrangements?

C. Cost and financial feasibility: What would be the initial and projected costs of such a program? How should costs be met? Should the program be self-supporting or publicly supported? In terms

*Although most of the models elsewhere in the United States are university-administered programs, the Massachusetts program is administered by its State Education Department and should be analyzed.

of public support would the approach be different at the secondary school level than at the college level?

Would a self-supporting program be out of reach of some of the individuals for whom the program seems to have particular promise? If self-supporting what will be the likely cost to the student? What financial commitment by the student will be required to guarantee serious intent and sustained participation? Can some arrangement for student financial aid be devised in a home study program?

D. Articulation with present educational program: Could present adult education programs, library extension services, educational television, etc. be articulated with a home study program so as to eliminate duplication of effort? How?

E. Role of new technologies: Which of the newer communication media could be, and should be, integrated with the traditional form of "correspondence" between instructor and student? What effect would the utilization of new devices have on costs, either to the individual or to the State? What additional professional know-how would be required to make more than a token effort in this regard?

F. Contract availability of present home study courses: One method of achieving early action in the establishment of a home study program would be to obtain through contract existing home study courses much in the same manner that the Department now contracts for outside examinations in the College Proficiency Examination

Program. Would home study schools, public or private, make courses available to a New York program? Would they develop courses specifically for a New York program? What review procedures would a New York program establish to check the adequacy of course offerings? Would "non-New York State" high school courses be acceptable to educators in New York? Would the problem of acceptability be the same at the college level?

Summary of proposal

Essentially the exploration of the feasibility of establishing a statewide home study program will have to do with the need for and the general financial and administrative arrangements of such a program. In light of the potential impact that a statewide home study program would have, its creation would have to evolve in a manner that is sensitive to the concerns of the professional educator. The investigation, therefore, should seek ways to demonstrate how a program of home study would supplement and strengthen existing educational endeavors in the State. With all care and objectivity the investigation should ascertain that quality or uniqueness of home study education that is not achieved through existing programs.

It is not thought that the investigation will research the effectiveness of home study as a method of education. Directed home study programs in the United States have been "tried" and found to be successful methods of educating millions of Americans in a variety of courses. Home study educators themselves are

mindful of needed improvements in their instructional methods, their administrative arrangements and in their handling of the correspondent student. If a statewide program was established, certainly these and other aspects would require continuing research. However, there seems to be no doubt as to the basic value of home study education and its place in America's system of education. The immediate problem for New York will be one of administrative decision based on several complex and interrelated factors that need to be explored fully.